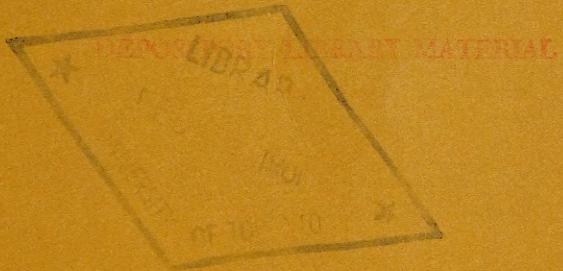


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Ontario  
Advisory Council  
on Senior Citizens

# Towards an understanding of the rural elderly



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**TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING**

of the

The Rural Development Outreach Project

**Rural Elderly.**

*Principal Researchers:*

**A Report**

*By Dr. M. J. Guelph*

**Prepared by the**

**Ontario Advisory Council on Senior Citizens**

*in*

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**The Rural Development Outreach Project**

**University of Guelph**

**August 1980**

\* \* \* \* \*



The present report was commissioned as a background study for the Ontario Advisory Council on Senior Citizens in late 1979. During a number of visits and council meetings held across the Province, it had become clear that the needs and qualities of senior citizens in non-metropolitan areas were substantially quite different from those in large urban centres. It was also discovered that very little work had been done on the subject.

### **The Rural Development Outreach Project**

The Council established the Rural Development Outreach Project (RDOP) to provide information on the needs and characteristics of senior citizens in rural areas.

#### **Principal Researchers:**

Two principal researchers were engaged in the investigation: Dr. A. Michalos and Dr. A. Fuller. Dr. A. Michalos is a professor at the University of Waterloo and Dr. A. Fuller is a professor at the University of Guelph. Both researchers have extensive experience in gerontology and have conducted research on the needs and characteristics of senior citizens in rural areas. Dr. J. Magee is a professor at the University of Western Ontario and Dr. A. Martin Matthews is a professor at the University of Guelph. Dr. L. Wood is a professor at the University of Waterloo and has worked with Professor A. Michalos and Dr. Fuller on this research. Professor Julian Magee (Geography and Planning) was the editor (1980), the vice-chair of the University of Guelph. Dr. Julian Magee has a academic interest in similar and different areas than have been taken up in this section. Specifically, he has interests and problems which have been recognized, but the report does provide a sound starting point for developing a better understanding of the general needs and future prospects of seniors in rural Ontario. In particular, it will provide detailed areas of particular concern which require action or further study.

#### **1980**

The Report is broken up into two volumes. The second volume (Volume One) contains an abstract and the best, with a small number of maps and diagrams. The second volume contains extended versions of the 1978 report (Dufferin County) and a list of data-tables from the York University National Longitudinal Study. For those interested in the subject of seniors in rural areas the second volume of the Report is essential reading and can be obtained from the Ontario Advisory Council on Senior Citizens or from the Rural Development Outreach project at the University of Guelph.



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## PREFACE

The present report was commissioned as a background study for the Ontario Advisory Council on Senior Citizens in late 1979. During a number of visits and Council meetings held across the Province, it had become clear that the needs and qualities of senior citizens in non-metropolitan areas were potentially quite different from those in large urban centres. It was also discovered that very little was known about rural seniors in Ontario.

The Council invited the Rural Development Outreach Project (RDOP) to prepare a background statement for the Council which would describe from existing information sources, the strengths and weaknesses of the lives of senior citizens in Ontario's rural areas. The RDOP was able to involve five professors in a collaborative review which produced this report. The principal researcher was Professor A. Michalos (Director, Social Indicators Research Group) who worked with Professor Linda Wood (Psychology), Professor Anne Martin Matthews (Family Studies), Professor Julius Mage (Geography) and Professor Tony Fuller (Director, RDOP). The wide range of expertise and the input from the Council has meant that a number of information sources and different views have been taken into consideration. Inevitably, some sources and problems will have been overlooked, but the report does provide a sound starting point for developing a better understanding of the general needs and future prospects of seniors in rural Ontario. In particular, it provides a detailed list of areas of particular concern which require action or further study.

The Report is printed in two volumes. The Report proper (Volume One) contains an abstract and the text, with a small number of maps and diagrams. The second volume contains shortened versions of the RDOP report (Huron County) and a list of data tables from the York University National Opinion Study. For those interested in the subject of seniors in rural areas, the second volume of the Report is essential reading and can be obtained from the Ontario Advisory Council on Senior Citizens or from the Rural Development Outreach Project at the University of Guelph.

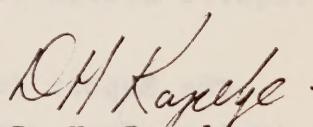
The Council believes the paper raises a number of issues that require further study and understanding. Also, it raises a number of very positive aspects that might provide solutions to problems faced by the urban senior.

It seems that one of the key issues that requires further study and is reflected in our recommendations, relates to the appropriate delivery service model that recognizes the special problem created by distance and isolation.

We obviously need to know more about the lives and numbers of rural seniors and trust the recommendations contained in this paper will stimulate the research community.

I am pleased my colleagues saw as a priority, the development of this statement "Towards an Understanding of the Rural Elderly" and commend them for their valuable input.

Finally, I want to express our appreciation to The Rural Development Outreach Project, University of Guelph, for their co-operation and assistance in producing this statement for the Ontario Advisory Council on Senior Citizens.



D. H. Rapelje,  
Chairman.

## ABSTRACT

This report represents the first attempt to bring together systematically, a rather limited body of research on Ontario's rural elderly. Although research on aging and the elderly in Canada has recently been given a funding priority in Canada, little work on the needs, concerns, and lifestyles of the elderly in rural areas is currently being done. This is particularly true in Ontario. This paucity of information severely hampers the efforts of public officials attempting to make useful and responsible decisions affecting rural seniors. This report thus brings together available data from a wide variety of sources, and also suggests directions for future research on Ontario's rural elderly population.

In the assessment of the needs of rural seniors, this report addresses two fundamental concerns, those of definition and of diversity. Almost as if by default, the term "rural" has come to be defined as all that which is non-urban, i.e. places with a population of less than 1,000 residents. Such a definition fails to consider the character of rural life. One frequently observes, for example, that life in a town of two thousand is in fact more similar to life in a village of 500 than to life in a city of 25,000 inhabitants. The town, although urban by definition, is often decidedly rural in character. This report conceptualizes the nature of rurality in far broader terms than does the typical census definition.

Secondly, this report acknowledges the tremendous diversity of rural life. While a general profile of Canada's rural elderly (as found in census data and in the research of York University investigators) is presented, this report stresses that Ontario's rural elderly are hardly a homogeneous group. To emphasize this point, we present data on two quite different populations of Ontario's rural elderly.

One of these includes residents of Huron County in southwestern Ontario, a population which has been extensively studied by associates of the Rural Development Outreach Project at the University of Guelph. This other population includes residents of the Kenora-Rainy River area of northern Ontario, on which little information is available.

This analysis suggests that the rural elderly are by no means overwhelmingly deprived. Their reported levels of life satisfaction are as high or higher than that of their urban counterparts. Nevertheless, problems of access to transportation are particularly evident, and bear directly upon the issue of the provision of appropriate, personal and local services, another area in which the rural elderly are disadvantaged. These data indicate that Ontario's rural elderly feel distinctly ostracized from the mechanisms of government, and are more likely than urban seniors to feel they have little say in matters directly affecting them.

Nevertheless, many rural seniors are more active than their urban counterparts, and their ability to overcome local difficulties and to organize and sustain self-reliant services and activities for themselves bears further examination by urban policymakers and program directors. Whatever the particular circumstances of rural seniors, the fact remains that the proportion of the elderly in many of rural Ontario's small towns is greater than 20 percent. In terms of the proportion of the elderly in many of rural Ontario's small towns is greater than 20 percent. In terms of the proportion of the elderly in the population, then, many rural areas now have the population distribution that Canada is projected to have in 2030. Further examination of the needs and strengths of the rural elderly thus provides a unique opportunity to "foresee" some of the effects on community life and community needs when one in every five citizens is over age 65.

This report concludes with several recommendations for further research and action for Ontario's rural elderly:

- a. Given the known concentration of seniors in rural Ontario, a study should be commissioned to identify exactly where such concentrations are located and how they relate to different regions of the province. Any such study should include future projections and account for current mobility patterns.
- b. Research is required to determine the differentiating characteristics of rural and urban seniors. Any major findings of such research should be related to current policy and programme directions in Ontario.
- c. Research is required to assess rural seniors' views of their own needs and priorities and to identify mechanisms for bringing rural seniors more directly into the planning process. The findings of such research should be employed in the development of policy and the planning of services and programs to ensure that these will indeed meet the needs of rural seniors.
- d. Further information should be gained about those activities in rural areas which have been judged by residents to be important, self-directed successes. These may well provide an example appropriate to the needs and concerns of other rural areas and urban groups.
- e. A systematic examination of social and health service systems in rural areas is required. The use of, access to, and awareness of these services by senior citizens should be considered.

The implications of promoting suitable models for delivering health, housing and social services for seniors in different rural areas must be explored, as well as ways of improving the system of sharing information on social and health services.

- F. Research examining the lives of seniors in such special areas of rural Ontario as single industry towns, native communities and tourist/retirement centres should be encouraged. Special attention needs to be directed toward the particular circumstances of the widowed, single families, homebound elderly, and those on fixed incomes in all rural areas.

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## INTRODUCTION

Every analysis of rural life begins with the problem of defining "rural". The 1971 census definition of "rural" is nonurban, and urban includes "all persons living in incorporated cities, towns, and villages with a population of 1,000 and over, as well as in unincorporated places of 1,000 and over having a population density of at least 1,000 a sq. mile ( $386/\text{km}^2$ ).""(Canada Year Book, 1967-77: 165). Several criticisms have been leveled against defining rural populations in this residualist fashion (as what is left over after the urbanites are identified), but it is one way to begin. When the Canadian Council on Rural Development met in Ottawa in the Fall of 1978 to try to solve this problem, they concluded that while

"the current definition of rural used by Statistics Canada did not capture the essence of rural both due to changes that have occurred in population and the inherent complexity of rural; there was a feeling in the workshop that at the national level, if a rural/urban split be retained, it should be kept simple and utilize a population size threshold as before.""(CCRD, 1978)

The residualist definition is used to draw the census statistics described in Sections I and II B below. In Section II C a less precise and perhaps more popular idea of rurality is used. Casual observation suggests that life in a town of two or three thousand is probably more like life in a town of less than a thousand or in the countryside than it is like life in a city of fifty thousand or more. With this in mind, it is reasonable to think of life in many Ontario counties as rural, and that is precisely the perspective adopted throughout most of this report.

The structure of the analysis is, briefly, as follows. In Section I A there is a brief review of the demographic structure of Ontario from the point of view of its senior population. This is followed by Section I B in which selected aspects of the rural population are examined through census statistics from 1971 and 1976. In Section II A there is a review of the literature on rural seniors in Ontario. The conclusion confirms that of another author who recently wrote that "It must be admitted that the research on Canada's rural aged is almost completely non-existent ..." (Marshall, 1980: 8).

Section II B presents some results of the national opinion survey conducted by York University in 1977. In Section II C the focus of attention narrows to Northern Ontario and then in Section II D to a single rural county, Huron, Ontario. When Sections II B, II C, and II D are combined, one begins to get an idea of how it feels to be a rural senior in Canada generally, and in Ontario, in particular.

Section III summarizes the strengths and weaknesses of the lives of seniors in rural Ontario. Given the limitations of the data, these conclusions are necessarily tentative. Nevertheless, the recognition of ignorance is still the most important step on the road to wisdom.

I DEMOGRAPHIC STRUCTURE AND SELECTED ASPECTS OF  
THE RURAL POPULATION

IA Demographic Structure

The Science Council of Canada, in its Perception 2 publication, has identified some rather dramatic increases in both the number and the proportion of Canada's aged population (65+ years of age). Table 1 lists the projected increases for 1981, 1991 and the year 2001. It is obvious that the elderly population is increasing at a rate much higher than the population as a whole. Fifty years ago fewer than 5 persons out of every 100 Canadian were in the elderly group - in another 20 years nearly 12 out of every 100 will be over 65 years of age.

CANADA'S AGING POPULATION (65+)

Table 1

ACTUAL, 1921-1971

PROJECTED, 1981-2001

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number 65+</u> (In 1000's)	<u>Per Cent 65+</u>
1921	420.0	4.8
1931	576.1	5.6
1941	768.0	6.7
1951	1086.3	7.8
1961	1391.2	7.6
1971	1744.5	8.1
1981	2272.3	9.5
1991	2916.0	11.0
2001	3341.8	11.8

SOURCE: Perceptions 2, Implications of the Changing Age Structure of the Canadian Population, Science Council of Canada, July 1976, p. 8.

Ontario's present age structure closely resembles that for Canada. Currently (1976) the elderly comprise about 8.5 percent of Ontario's population. It is anticipated that by the year 2001, nearly 11 percent will be in the aged category. Table 2 summarizes the projected number of elderly for Ontario and Appendix Section Three contains the specific projections by age groups.

**POPULATION PROJECTIONS, ONTARIO**  
**SELECTED YEARS 1971-2001**

Table 2

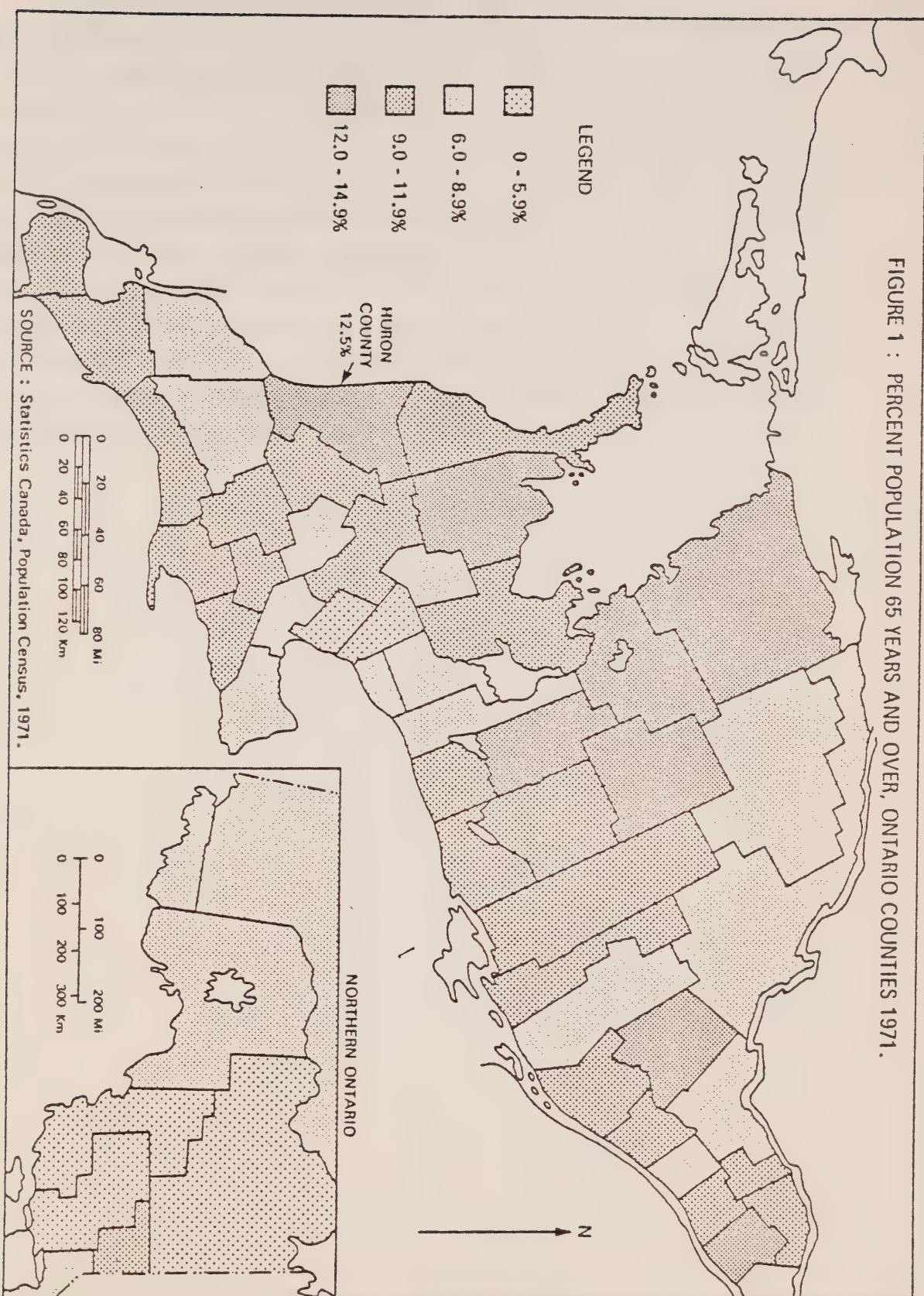
<u>Year</u>	<u>65+ Totals</u>	<u>65+ Percent</u>
*1971	644,410	8.4%
*1976	710,057	8.5%
1981	800,362	8.9%
1986	889,823	9.2%
1991	1,018,462	9.9%
1996	1,118,137	10.4%
2001	1,191,106	10.6%

1) Projections based on the following assumptions:  
low fertility, 500,000 net external migration  
per annum, internal migration at 0.27 percent  
of Ontario population.

\* Actual Figures

SOURCE: T.E.I.G.A., Ontario Statistics, 1976.

FIGURE 1 : PERCENT POPULATION 65 YEARS AND OVER, ONTARIO COUNTIES 1971.





One should also be aware that within an area such as Ontario there are regional imbalances with respect to the relative concentration of the elderly. Figure 1 portrays the proportion of elderly within each county and district of Ontario. Notwithstanding the tremendous variations in absolute population numbers between counties containing large cities and counties whose population is mainly non-urban, there are obvious relative concentrations of the elderly of about 50 percent higher than the Provincial average and 3 to 4 times greater than some urban oriented Regions such as Peel or Halton. Such disparities, illustrated by this example, suggest that the phenomenon should also be examined from a regional perspective.

Using Census statistics one can also "place" the rural elderly within the context of Ontario's total population and Ontario's rural population. Note (Table 3) that there is almost a one-to-one ratio between the proportion of rural population which is aged (8.8%) and the proportion of total population 65 years of age and over. Similarly, nearly 18 percent of Ontario's population was classified as "rural" while nearly 19 percent of all elderly persons were classified as rural. Hence the rural sector, as defined by the census, appears to have, for Ontario as a whole, no particular concentration of the elderly relative to its share of the total population. This fact remains virtually unchanged in 1976 (Table 3).

#### ONTARIO'S RURAL ELDERLY

Table 3

#### NUMBER AND PERCENT

1971 (1976)\*

	All Ontario	Rural Ontario	% Rural of Total
Total	7,703,105 (8,325,314)	1,359,475 (1,555,945)	17.6 % (18.7)%
Total 65+	644,410 (710,057)	119,825 (133,770)	18.6 % (18.4)%
% 65+	8.4 (8.5)	8.8 (8.6)	

\* 1976 Figures In Parentheses

SOURCE: Statistics Canada, Special Data Run,  
February 1980.

It is important to emphasize that not only do such broad statistics obscure the regional disparities described above, they are also based upon a very restrictive definition of rural. Thus, the figures reported above are under-estimates of what might be thought of as the rural population.

#### IB Selected Aspects of the Rural Population in Ontario

Data from the 1971 and 1976 Census of Canada provide a broad demographic profile of rural Ontario residents generally and of rural senior citizens in particular. This section presents such a profile, comparing the rural elderly with rural people in general, where appropriate. It considers first the characteristics of the elderly as individuals and then in households.

The vast majority of Ontario rural seniors (81%) are English speaking, with an additional six percent franco-phone and five percent German speaking. Most rural seniors are married (61%), in contrast to 48% of rural residents generally in 1976. As might be expected, many more rural seniors (29%) than other rural residents (4%) were widowed as of 1976.

**INDIVIDUALS LIVING IN RURAL AREAS OF ONTARIO  
BY MARITAL STATUS, 1976**

**Table 4**

<u>Marital Status</u>	<u>Seniors</u>		<u>All-Rural</u>	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Married	80,975	61%	746,815	48 %
Single	11,065	8%	724,080	47 %
Divorced	1,030	1%	10,510	1 %
Separated	2,010	2%	17,565	1 %
Widowed	38,695	29%	56,980	4 %
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>133,770</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1,555,945</b>	<b>100 %</b>

SOURCE: Statistics Canada, Special Data Run,  
February 1980.

As Table 5 illustrates, nearly half the rural elderly in 1976 lived only with their spouse, while 19 percent lived alone. All others lived with at least one other related or non-related person. Of all rural households with a senior resident, 15 percent were living on farms in 1976.

**LIVING ARRANGEMENTS OF RURAL SENIORS IN ONTARIO, 1976**
**Table 5**

Arrangements	Number	Percentage
Living alone	23,765	19%
With Spouse (2)*	60,595	48%
With Relative (2)	7,635	6%
With Non-Relative (2)	2,355	2%
With Relative (3+)	29,685	24%
With Non-Relative (3+)	1,500	1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>125,535</b>	<b>100%</b>

\* Number in parentheses indicate numbers of people in the household unit.

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SOURCE: Statistics Canada,  
Special Data Run, February 1980.

### Economic Status

Rural economic families are groups of individuals sharing the same income. In 1971, 19 percent of these families had at least one senior citizen in them. The average income of these families was \$6,955.00, compared to an average of \$9,243.00 for rural economic families without any senior citizens in them.

It is noteworthy that while it would have been possible to look at the living arrangements of families consisting only of seniors, that would not have given us a view of the living arrangements of all seniors. For example, many of the 81 percent of rural seniors living with someone in 1976 may have been living with a non-senior. In that case, an investigation of households with only seniors would have excluded some seniors. The difference between a family and a household is a matter of the difference between legally related individuals (families) and groups of individuals sharing a dwelling without necessarily having legal relationships (households). Clearly, the classification of households is broader than the classification of families (the term household includes a more varied assortment of living arrangements). Thus, in order to avoid missing any seniors, this analysis is based on a comparison of rural households with at least one senior versus rural households without any seniors. To our knowledge, this is the first time census data have been analyzed in this way.

Data indicate that more households with rural seniors (89%) than without rural seniors (83%) lived in owner-occupied homes in 1976. Fully 21 percent of all rural households had at least one senior living in them that year. In 1971 exactly half of the homes with at least one senior were built in 1920 or earlier. This contrasts with only 39 percent of the homes without any seniors. The rural elderly, like their urban counterparts, are thus very likely to be living in non-rented, older housing stock (Statistics Canada, 1979).

Given the fact that the dwellings of households with seniors tend to be older than those of households without seniors, one would expect the facilities of the former to be more primitive than the facilities of the latter. Census data confirm this. In 1971, 78 percent of the dwellings with seniors had private baths with flush toilets, compared to 86% of the dwellings without seniors. Also, more dwellings with seniors (35%) than without seniors (24%) in 1971 relied on stove space heaters for home heating. Fewer homes with seniors (50%) than without seniors (62%) had freezers.

While the homes with seniors residents were more likely to lack specific amenities, they also were less crowded than those of rural residents in general. The dwellings with seniors had .36 persons per room, while those without seniors on average held .60 persons per room.

Data from the 1971 and 1976 Census also confirm findings from other surveys (Armstrong and Fuller, 1979; Rural Development Outreach Project, 1979) that the elderly in rural areas lack access to available transportation. Twenty-eight percent of the dwellings with seniors had no automobile, compared to only seven percent of the dwellings without seniors.

These data suggest that the rural elderly are more likely than other rural people to live in owner-occupied dwellings, and also tend to have less crowding. On the other hand, households with seniors tend to have smaller family incomes; and are less likely to have such taken-for-granted amenities as private flush toilets and piped hot and cold water, or the convenience of freezers, dishwashers or automobiles. Households with seniors typically occupy older homes than do households without seniors, suggesting higher expenditures for maintenance and heating.

## II GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF RURAL SENIORS

### II A Literature Search

The research literature on rural seniors in Ontario is appallingly sparse, and it seems highly probable that it will continue to be this way in the near future.

A computerized search was conducted in three data bases that might have information on rural seniors:

1. Psychological Abstracts - covering the years from 1967 to the present and including 280,000 titles of articles, monographs and books. The word "rural" generated 181 references, "aged/elderly" yielded 2,385 references, and the combination of "rural" and "elderly" gave us 28 references.
2. Comprehensive Dissertation Abstracts - covering the years from 1861 to the present and including 640,000 titles. "Rural" yielded 1,851 references, "aged/elderly" 727 and the combination, only 7 references.
3. Sociological Abstracts - covering the years 1963 to the present and 90,000 titles. "Rural" gave us 2,932 references, "aged/elderly" 1,293 and the combination 56 references.

Since the three data sets have some overlaps, there were somewhat fewer than 91 distinct and apparently relevant titles. Some of the titles indicated that the articles had practically nothing to do with rural seniors. Most surprising was the fact that not one title in these one million was about rural seniors in Ontario.

A recent bibliography of material on the rural elderly (Marshall, 1977) contains only two references to research on Ontario's rural seniors. One dealt with migration between Ontario and Quebec in the 1956-61 period (Amyot, 1973), and the other examined the growth of Ontario's population from 1881 to 1966 (Ontario Department of Health, 1968).

Despite the fact that the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council has recently identified studies of aging and the elderly as a research priority, little research on the needs, concerns and lifestyles of Canada's rural elderly is either being currently conducted or immediately planned. In recent years, the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food has funded research on rural living, and this has included several ongoing projects related to such aspects of rural aging as retirement (Brown and Martin Matthews, 1980) and family resources and quality of life (Engberg, 1979).

The Rural Development Outreach Project (RDOP) at the University of Guelph has also supported and facilitated research on selected aspects of rural aging (Armstrong, 1978; Armstrong and Fuller, 1979; Armstrong, 1979; Fitzsimmons, 1980; Mage, 1979; Michalos, forthcoming; Pagliccia, 1979; Wood, 1979) in Huron County, Ontario.\* Indeed, much of the present report is based on the data gathered by associates of the RDOP in Huron. Such projects, while providing valuable preliminary impressions of the lives of the rural Ontario elderly are, however, but isolated individual endeavours. Much work remains to be done. At present, there is little information available on Ontario's rural elderly, a situation unlikely to change in the near future.

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\* These reports are contained in an Appendix separate from this volume.

II B National Opinion Survey, Institute of Behavioural Research,  
York University, Summer, 1977.

In the summer of 1977, the Institute for Behavioural Research conducted a national survey of over three thousand adult Canadians, including approximately 360 seniors. The rural segment of the sample contained around 350 individuals, and the rural senior segment contained about 90. Appendix Section Ten contains a summary of the results of 21 questions from that survey, with comparisons among three groups, namely, all adults, all seniors and all rural seniors. Here we will focus largely upon those items for which the responses of rural seniors differed significantly from the responses of the other two groups.

On only three items were the responses of rural seniors more positive (or less negative) than the responses of others. Rural seniors tended to have fewer problems with "noise from traffic, trains, airplanes, industry and things like that" (Item #2), although in none of the groups did half or more of the respondents feel that their lives were particularly satisfactory with respect to noise. Rural seniors seemed to feel safer from crime (#4), with slightly more than half responding this way compared with slightly less than half of the other two groups. Finally, rural seniors were less likely than any other groups to respond that "more effort should be put into helping retired people" (#8); only half of them supported this idea. This last response was especially notable when one considers some of the unique problems of rural seniors. It was not, however, entirely unexpected, since rural people tend to be independent in spirit and lifestyle. Rural seniors have typically spent a lifetime looking after themselves and they do not seem to be interested in the idea that anyone else might do more for them. That may not be news to public officials, and it may not be inconsequential for the level of services actually delivered to rural seniors.

On five items, the responses of rural seniors were even more negative than those of the other groups. Rural seniors were substantially below other groups in their satisfaction with shopping facilities (#5) and with public transportation (#6). Fewer rural seniors than any other groups thought that their lives were getting better (#9). More rural seniors than any other groups thought that the government doesn't care about people like them (#16) and that they don't have a say in what the government does (#17). It should be noted that the responses of rural seniors to these items indicated very low satisfaction not only relative to the other groups, but also on an absolute level.

These findings seem to indicate quite clearly that rural seniors are physically isolated people with distinct feelings of psychological isolation from their government. Nevertheless, they are the least likely to ask for more influence or help; their greatest strength (rugged individualism) is apparently their undoing as far as government influence is concerned.

On the remaining 13 of the 21 questions, the responses by rural seniors did not differ significantly from the responses of all seniors or of all adults. Briefly, these questions concerned: the condition of streets and roads in the area; neighbours; satisfaction with the city or town as a place to live; happiness; satisfaction with life as a whole; evaluation of different aspects of life (financial, health, marriage, friendships and spare time); satisfaction with progress made toward an important goal; views of the helpfulness of other people; and the extent to which people feel that they can run their own lives. The responses of all groups to these questions were quite positive, with four exceptions. Only one third of the respondents felt that the condition of streets and roads was excellent or very good; approximately one half of the respondents said that they were very happy, felt that their financial situation was good or better, and believed that most of the time people try to be helpful (see Appendix Section Eleven).

To summarize, rural seniors do appear to have feelings similar to other segments of the society on many of the topics covered in this survey; by and large, these feelings are quite positive, particularly with respect to "subjective" aspects of life. However, rural seniors do differ significantly from others on several issues, and are more likely to be dissatisfied with their influence on government and with the provision of services.

## II C Northern Ontario\*

Research and statistics which focus broadly on the rural aged population in Canada or in Ontario may obscure important differences between rural environments. One may expect different kinds of rurality in the North and in the South, and within the North itself as well.

There are clearly characteristics which are common to all rural life, such as low population densities, large distances between population centers, isolation and difficulties created by severe winter conditions. However, the degree to which these characteristics describe rural life may differ greatly both within the North, and between the North and the South. These differences may become qualitative as well as quantitative, insofar as their impact on the well-being of seniors is concerned. For example, rural life in the North may be quite different from rural life in the South, simply because it is embedded in a rural rather than in an urban area (assuming that one can view the North as essentially rural despite the presence of some large population centres and the census definition of rural). Additionally, there may be characteristics of rural life which are essentially peculiar to the North: The generally prosperous but limited economy; certain migration patterns; certain political expectations; and the presence of single industry towns. It may be, therefore, premature to assume that the needs of seniors are completely similar in, for example, areas of clay-belt farming, and mine or rail towns. Even where similar levels of services are provided to different areas they may not be equally effective in meeting these needs. Thus an adequate understanding of the lives and needs of rural seniors will require attention both to the North and to different communities within the North.

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\* This preliminary review is based in part on a draft submission by Dr. B. Minore, Professor of Sociology, Lakehead University.

As is the case elsewhere, there is little literature on the needs of the elderly in the North. However, some recent reports and briefs (see OACSC, 1979) have focused attention upon such needs, particularly as these relate to health and social services.

As might be expected, seniors in the North do share many of the concerns of seniors elsewhere: finances, health care, housing, institutional services and transportation. There are, however, regional variations in the needs identified by seniors. In the Kenora and Rainy River District Health Council Survey of The Elderly (1979) which involved personal interviews of 292 respondents, four services were found to be in greater demand by seniors in outlying than in urban areas: Homemakers, Home Care Nursing, Special Transportation and Home Renovation Funding.

It has been suggested that the needs of senior citizens in the North are being met to a much greater extent than might be expected. The report mentioned above proposes that the number of respondents on the waiting lists for various facilities (2.5%) "supports the low proportion of respondents whose needs are not being met." (1979: 20). Further, less than one-seventh of the respondents (14%) reported difficulty in obtaining required social services (although, as the report notes, this latter finding may be due to lack of awareness rather than to adequacy of service.)

Again, however, there are regional variations in the adequacy of services provided. The above report notes that "outlying areas strongly indicated a need for more support and medical services" (1979: 4) in connection with accommodation preferences. Further, some communities have indicated an urgent need for particular services.

For example, there is no home for the aged or nursing home in Dryden. Thus some seniors must either be kept in the hospital or sent great distances in order to receive needed care. (OACSC, 1979). In Sioux Lookout, there is a need for extended and residential care, a Homecare Program, Homemakers' Service, Meals-On-Wheels, and Home Support. (OACSC, 1979). Thus it appears that a more detailed and comprehensive assessment of the needs of seniors in the North is required; such an assessment should also include attention to psychological needs which may not be directly related to the provision of any specific health or social service.

Finally, further attention needs to be given to the problem of service delivery in certain areas of the North. As noted in the Planning Report of the Kenora and Rainy River District Health Council and the report of the Ontario Advisory Council on Senior Citizens' Regional visit to Dryden (1979), the demand for specific services in small, rural communities may be insufficient to institute any specific service in isolation.\* Such a service might be justified if a number of services could be co-ordinated.

In addition to the need for a provision of services to seniors in the North, an important focus would seem to be seniors' perceptions of the availability of services and the extent to which such perceptions are accurate. The Kenora and Rainy River District Health Council Report describes some of these perceptions and notes that some senior citizens are unaware of certain available services.

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\* Copies of the Council Report of the Dryden Visit are available from the Council Office.

Further, perceptions of the availability of some services vary by municipality. Rural residents are more likely to report that such services are not available to them than are urban residents. For example, "the Meals-On-Wheels services was perceived to be unavailable by 48.7 percent of those respondents residing in urban areas, but 90.3 percent of those in the outlying areas felt the service was unavailable." (1979:10) Rural residents are also less likely to perceive the availability of Homemaker, Home Care Nursing and Public Health Nursing services, although they are more aware of Home Renovation Funding than are urban residents.

Thus, there appears to be a clear need for an information program which will increase seniors' awareness of services which are available, particularly in rural areas. Further, attention should also be given to the mechanisms by which seniors are most likely to utilize needed services once they become aware of them. It appears that multi-purpose centres providing co-ordinated services would be the most effective means of reaching such goals. Careful attention, however, must be given to the location of such centres, both among and within communities.

## II D Huron County, Ontario

A fourth level of information from which the needs of rural seniors can be identified is that of the County case study. Although narrow in geographic scope, this is more than compensated for by the expansion of analytic detail.

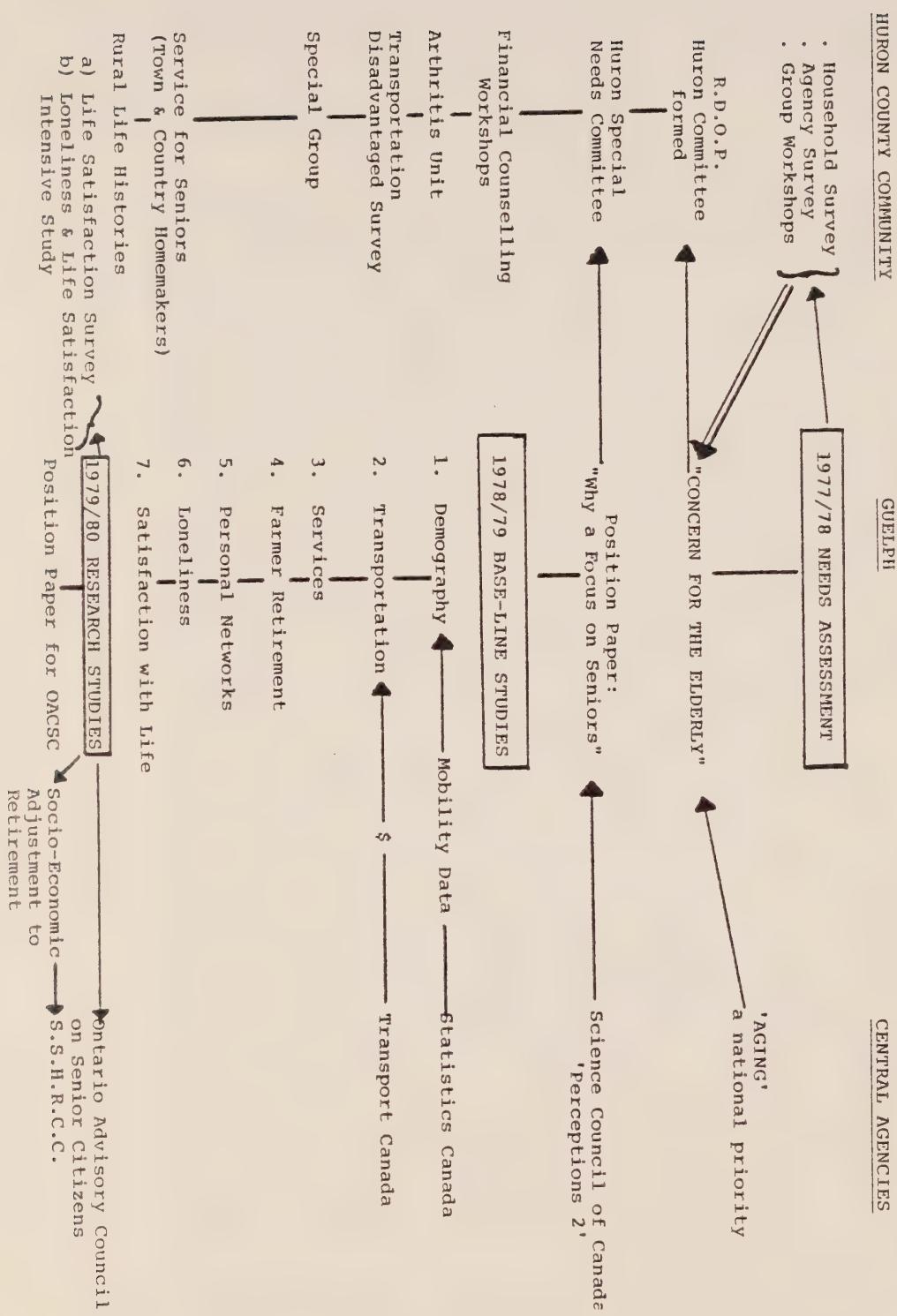
In 1976, with the help of a grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation of Battle Creek, Michigan, the Rural Development Outreach Project (RDOP) was established at the University of Guelph (see Appendix Section One). Designed to link University resources and expertise with the needs and aspirations of rural communities, the Project initiated a continuing research and action program in Huron County. Much of the little known about the life of rural seniors in Ontario has been learned through RDOP activities.

The Project is based on a concept of rural development which is comprehensive and integrated in scope and comprises four essential developmental components: human development; economic development; environmental quality; and community facilities. Utilizing these four components in various interdependent relationships, one can identify, plan and implement change and measure community impact in rural development.

The evolution of the Guelph outreach program for rural seniors in Huron County is illustrated in Figure 2. A series of needs assessments, workshops, agency and household surveys resulted in a focus on the rural elderly.

Figure 2

EVOLUTION OF GUELPH OUTREACH PROGRAMME FOR RURAL SENIORS  
UNIVERSITY OUTREACH





It was learned from almost all contacts that there was a concern for the future well-being of senior citizens in rural areas. Based on the RDOP position paper "Why a Focus on Seniors" (1978), a series of Base Line studies were undertaken by Guelph faculty and RDOP staff (see Appendix Section Two). These studies form the basis of many of the observations made in this report.

1. Demography - In 1971, Huron County had one of the highest concentrations of seniors of any county in Ontario (see Figure 1, p. 5). Nearly 13 percent of Huron's population was 65 years old or older, compared to the Provincial figure of 8.4 percent. The percent of seniors in towns and villages is typically higher than the percent of seniors in the remaining rural and farming areas. A rural township in Huron, for example, would typically have less than 12 percent of its population in the senior group, while the town with the very lowest percentage of seniors, Goderich, had 15 percent. The towns of Brussels and Bayfield had 25 percent seniors in 1971. Generally speaking, seniors tend to move less often than most people. In Huron, 73 percent of rural seniors lived in the same dwelling when surveyed in 1966 and 1971. Another 8 percent lived in the same community, although in different dwellings. THE MOST RELIABLE PROJECTIONS FOR THE FUTURE INDICATE THAT THE PERCENTAGE OF HURON'S SENIOR POPULATION WILL CONTINUE TO INCREASE APPRECIABLY BEYOND THE 12.5 PERCENT OF 1976. INDEED, THIS PERCENTAGE HAS ALREADY BEEN SURPASSED IN ALL VILLAGES AND TOWNS IN HURON COUNTY. (See Appendix Section Three, Table 4)
2. Transportation - Short-term mobility or transportation was identified as a special problem for rural seniors. (See Appendix Section Two) However, it was easier to appreciate the problem than

it was to define and measure it. In 1978, the RDOP undertook a survey in north Huron, covering six townships and three towns, to obtain a better measure of the nature and extent of personal mobility problems. The data confirmed that there is a high dependence on the private vehicle in rural areas: under 4 percent had used the local taxi in the past six months, and only 7 percent had used the regional bus. Nearly 9 percent of the sample group were judged to have a transportation problem either because they were without a car in the household, had no access to another vehicle or were elderly, handicapped, or both (chronically disadvantaged).

SINCE THE MAJORITY OF THE TRANSPORTATION DISADVANTAGED GROUP ARE ELDERLY AND/OR HANDICAPPED (70%) SPECIAL CONSIDERATION SHOULD BE GIVEN TO THIS ASPECT OF LIFE FOR RURAL SENIORS. (See Appendix Section Four)

3. Services - Social services for seniors include agencies providing necessities of life (food, shelter, clothing), recreational services, home care and institutions providing alternative care. The physical dispersion of rural seniors complicates the provision of services, but the general strategy is to encourage people to stay in their own homes as long as possible. The demand for senior citizen rent/geared-to-income housing in the county exceeds the current supply. The Huron County Housing Authority has (at this writing) 261 applications on file. The Public Health Unit has initiated an ongoing survey of seniors in the county in order to provide the necessary communication links between the needy and the service agencies. VIRTUALLY EVERYTHING THE RDOP HAS LEARNED ABOUT RURAL SENIORS INDICATES THAT PERSONAL CONTACTS (PEOPLE IN ONE-TO-ONE DISCUSSIONS) ARE THE ONLY EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT COMMUNICATION LINKS AVAILABLE. The Public Health Unit (largely trained nurses) of Huron discovered this fact early and has responded to it positively. (See Appendix Section Five).

4. Personal Networks - Networks of human relations serve the vital functions of communicating information, beliefs and attitudes, and allowing the exchange of goods and services. Personal networks (family and friends) may be particularly important for seniors in view of their declining access to goods and services, increased need for emotional support, increased need for the security of known contacts, and greater experience with individuals than with bureaucracies. It was therefore hypothesized that seniors would rely more on primary, personal networks than on secondary contact (specialists and professionals), whereas younger people would rely more on secondary than on primary contacts. However, the data from the baseline community survey in Huron County concerning sources of information and sources of advice provide no support for this hypothesis. In contrast, seniors tend to rely more and younger people less on secondary (non-family, non-friend) relationships to maintain a given level of communication and exchange. While seniors may have a particular need for primary network support, such support is less likely to be available because of the disruption of networks through death and relocation. Given the reluctance of rural seniors to allow themselves to be a burden on anyone, the typical result seems to be that SENIORS SIMPLY LOWER THEIR LEVEL OF COMMUNICATION AND EXCHANGE, WHICH MAY BE DIRECTLY RELATED TO THEIR EXPERIENCE OF ISOLATION AND LONELINESS. (See Appendix Section Six)
5. Loneliness - Among the items in the baseline community survey, there was a question asking people to rank their lives on a scale from one to seven with "full of friends" at one end and

"lonely" at the other. Loneliness as measured by this item was found to be positively related to chronic illness, physical handicaps, living in open country (vs. in a village or town), perceived poor health, frequency of conversation with neighbours, number of evenings spent at home, solitary participation in recreational activities, feeling unsafe in one's home or in nearby areas, feeling cheated or unfairly treated by others in business or service interactions, and being unmarried. Loneliness is inversely related to job satisfaction, satisfaction with living in the area, satisfaction with opportunities for community participation, and personal life satisfaction. No relationships were found between loneliness and age, and the correlates of loneliness in the senior segment of the sample are generally similar to those for the overall population. However, FOR SENIORS, LONELINESS IS UNRELATED TO PERCEIVED HEALTH OR TO SATISFACTION WITH COMMUNITY OPPORTUNITIES: GREATER LONELINESS IS ASSOCIATED WITH READING FEWER BOOKS, WATCHING MORE TELEVISION, AND SPENDING MORE UNSTRUCTURED TIME. Although these findings may not be very reliable because of the weak nature of the loneliness measure and the small sample, they are consistent with the results of some previous studies. (See Appendix Section Seven)

6.

Satisfaction With Life - When comparing satisfaction with life for seniors and non-seniors, it was found that seniors perceived themselves to be at least as well off as others. Seniors generally reported higher levels of satisfaction than non-seniors for their residence, the area around their residence, available recreational opportunities, opportunities for group activities

as a whole, and for elderly group activities in particular. SENIORS ALSO GENERALLY REPORTED HIGHER OVERALL LEVELS OF PERSONAL LIFE SATISFACTION THAN NON-SENIORS. Those seniors who reported lower overall levels of personal life satisfaction were characterized as having significantly lower satisfaction levels with their jobs, home life, health and family income than the rest of the population. In contrast, seniors reporting higher overall levels of personal life satisfaction were characterized by relatively high satisfaction with jobs and home life. (See Appendix Section Eight)

7.

Explaining Reported Satisfaction - A common concern about surveys generally and about surveys of rural people in particular is: You may get some responses, but you won't find out how the people really feel. After all, the interviewers tend to be total strangers who show up for one hour or two, probe into some fairly personal aspects of people's lives and then pass into oblivion. How many people would be inclined to treat the interview as anything more than a polite conversation, where "polite" implies not baring one's breast of all personal burdens? Apart from the methodological limitations on the quest for understanding about satisfaction with life for rural seniors, there are also theoretical limitations. It is easy to demonstrate that satisfaction with life as a whole is determined in large measure by satisfaction with specific domains of life; e.g. satisfaction with family relations, housing, transportation facilities, and so on. But what about satisfaction itself, satisfaction with anything at all? At a more general level, that is, what determines how satisfied anyone is with anything?

Following others, researchers with the RDOP have attempted to account for satisfaction in terms of the perceived gap between one's aspirations and actual achievement, comparisons with one's best previous experiences and comparisons with one's perceptions of the status of other people. It is possible, for example, that rural seniors report higher levels of satisfaction than others because seniors have lower aspirations or a more limited idea of what is possible for them to achieve. Lower aspirations may be largely a matter of drying off behind the ears, of learning that life is a matter of accommodation. On the other hand, it may be the result of unwarranted resignation. Nobody would listen; so why complain. At this time the reasons for reported life satisfaction remain very difficult to assess. (See Appendix Section Nine)

### III STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF LIFE FOR RURAL SENIORS

It is evident from the sparse and varied information on rural seniors in Ontario that only a partial understanding of their needs and strengths can be established at this time. Further research needs to be done in several critical areas to determine the exact nature of the problems suggested by the available evidence. The themes of concern include the overall position of seniors in rural areas given:

- a) the nature of rurality
- b) the demographic maturity of the population structure, and
- c) particular strengths and weaknesses of life for rural seniors.

#### III A The Nature of Rurality

The question of the importance of "rurality" often degenerates into purely academic debate, although in this case, there is evidence to suggest that seniors in rural areas face certain special difficulties due to their location in small towns or open countryside. Two features of rurality predominate: low density of population and long distances between population groupings.

As was observed in the Huron County studies, the nature of social service provision is necessarily different and often strained in rural areas. Providing equal access to social services raises the question of location, integration and organization of services for the rural elderly. Getting to service centres may depend upon locations as well as personal and household circumstances. Low utilization of rural services reflects a mismatch between service provision and the use of that service by special groups such as seniors. Stigma attached to the use of some services, low awareness of their presence and applicability, their scattered and intermittent availability, low individual mobility combined with lack of public transportation have

all been itemized as causes of low service usage. Above all, the preference for home care and personal independence is overriding which, together with the well developed informal support networks for seniors, combines to make the supply and demand of social services for seniors in rural Ontario a relatively unsatisfactory situation at the present time.

Allied with the question of appropriate delivery of social services for rural seniors is the burgeoning question of costs. Arguably the most pressing problem which faces senior citizens in rural areas, because of the nature of rurality, is the effect of the rising cost of energy. The impact of higher fuel costs is pervasive. It will affect the capacity of agencies and organizations to deliver services, whether centrally located or door-to-door, and it will certainly affect the ability of fixed income seniors to travel. The one singular feature of rurality is distance, and the time/fiscal cost of covering distance is directly related to energy costs. Availability of fuels to both seniors and organizations is a second order concern (long term), but needs to be taken into consideration now in evaluating the planning of support services in rural areas.

In Southern Ontario, rural areas consist of several residential environments ranging from open countryside for farm and rural non-farm residences, to hamlets, villages and towns. Given this type of population distribution, with senior citizens already concentrated in the small centres, and given energy costs and availability and the desire of rural seniors to maintain some level of local-personal independence, the question of social service location becomes complex and worthy of further investigation. In this light an understanding of life satisfaction among rural seniors has a practical and policy-oriented value.

In Northern Ontario the situation may be as serious again because of the intermittent nature of human settlements and the vast areas of unoccupied territory. Careful location

of centralized services may be even more critical in this environment where added impediments of weather and environmental constraints inhibit the mobility of seniors and of those who serve them. The support networks required to augment centralized service systems given the tiny and straggling nature of many outlying communities (the majority of which are found in unorganized municipal areas) are another focus for future investigation and concern.

It is clear that in terms of residential environments for seniors, rural Ontario provides a wide range of differences, and that singular rural solutions will not necessarily add to the effectiveness of social and health provision unless they are conscious of local conditions and the special needs of seniors themselves.

### III B Demographic Maturation in Rural Areas

If low density and distance are two differentiating characteristics of rural areas, then the demographic maturity of rural populations is equally as distinctive. Given that the provincial average of seniors in the total population is 8.4 percent and the proportion in rural areas ranges from 13 - 26 percent, it is evident that a significant imbalance exists in the distribution of senior citizens. In simple terms, rural areas in Ontario have a population structure that is generally predicted to prevail in Canada by the year 2001. This situation, therefore, provides an important opportunity to study problems and demonstrate potential solutions for future rural and urban elderly.

### III C Special Characteristics of Life for Rural Seniors: Strengths and Weaknesses

It would be a mistake to think of rural seniors as a group of severely and uniquely handicapped people, living in isolation and neglect in the wilderness. Insofar as the results of available research are generalizable,

there are many strengths associated with this group. In many ways they are probably as well or better off than average adult Canadians.

Rural seniors in Ontario report levels of satisfaction that are as high or higher than levels reported by other Canadians for happiness with life as a whole, satisfaction with life as a whole, marriage, friendship networks, goal achievement, trust in others, ability to run their own lives and opportunities for group participation.

Rural seniors also report levels of satisfaction that are as high or higher than levels reported by other Canadians for financial security. But rural seniors do tend to have lower levels of income than average Canadians.

Issues related to road and street maintenance, noise pollution, neighbourhood attractiveness, leisure activities and freedom from crime, also are less problematic for rural seniors than for other Canadians. Despite the fact that they live in older homes which may lack certain taken-for-granted amenities, rural seniors tend to be more satisfied than others with their housing.

Rural seniors are also the least likely to ask the government for more help. Given the explanatory model of satisfaction described in the previous sections one cannot simply jump to the conclusion that all is well with people who express high levels of satisfaction. After all, their levels of information, experience and aspiration may be comparatively low. Given the extremely low levels of belief that rural seniors have about their government's interest in them it may well be the case that this is the main determinant of their reluctance to ask for more. In short, maybe rural seniors are not inclined to ask for more because they are confident that nothing more would be done for them.

A most important element that may be described as a strength is that despite low levels of interest in government programmes and low use of public services, the

activity levels of many rural seniors are as high and varied as anywhere else. Informal networks of support, local service organizations, strong family ties, neighbourhood systems and a penchant for locally based activities are evidence of an active life for many rural seniors both as participants and organizers. The independence of some groups is jealously guarded and it would be instructive to learn how such support structures have, to date, survived the supposed erosion of the family, the decline of the church, the invasion of ex-urbanites and the weakening of values and ethics commonly associated with traditional communities.

Despite the strengths which may characterize the life of rural seniors, there are certain areas in which they remain disadvantaged. Of primary importance is the question of rural transportation. The Guelph studies have shown that in a system without public transportation on a local basis, there is an absolute reliance on the private motor vehicle. Where access to a vehicle is restricted, a senior's personal mobility may be limited. Transportation affects use of services (especially those only open weekdays, during office hours), shopping, visiting and pleasure trips. The increasing cost of energy is an added and complicating factor. The cost of mobility for people with fixed incomes, the ethic of independence, and the reluctance to ask for continual help, all contribute to conservative activity patterns for some groups of seniors. To what extent this is enforced isolation leading to loneliness and attendant problems, and to what extent it is a welcome feature akin to solitude is yet to be determined. Certainly, lack of even a basic system of public transport in rural areas restricts personal choice and structures the behaviour of some seniors. The York University survey showed a high level of dissatisfaction with the lack of public transportation.

Another critical need is to make service provision appropriate, personal and local, where possible. There is evidence to suggest that rural seniors do not respond to conventional methods of transmitting information such as brochures, newspaper notices and directories. Word of mouth, personal contacts and recommendations must be built in to the provision and operation of certain types of services. In addition, given a minimum of support, rural seniors can organize and operate many programmes and activities for themselves.

Finally, there are a number of areas in which further investigation would prove very useful for understanding the situation of rural seniors and for identifying appropriate responses to meet their needs and maximize their strengths.

### III D Needs and Recommendations

On the whole, rural seniors in Ontario are not overwhelmingly deprived - only certain groups and individuals in some areas have special problems and may be described as disadvantaged. Clearly, many rural seniors are more active than their urban counterparts and we should learn directly from these rural examples of how seniors overcome local difficulties and organize and sustain self-reliant services and activities for themselves. Whatever the particular circumstances of rural seniors, the fact remains that the proportion of elderly in many of rural Ontario's small towns is such (greater than 20%) that we are provided with an ideal learning opportunity for further understanding the problems and needs of the disadvantaged and the strengths and methods of their successes. In all respects, more studies are required to fully appreciate the needs and strengths of Seniors in our rural areas.

## Recommendations

Fact:

The proportion of people aged 60 and over in rural and small towns in Ontario is already well above the Canadian and provincial average.

Research:

Studies of the exact distribution of seniors and different projections for future trends need to be combined with studies of mobility patterns such that an accurate picture of the future demographic structure of rural populations can be developed.

Recommendations:

- a) GIVEN THE KNOWN CONCENTRATION OF SENIORS IN RURAL ONTARIO A STUDY SHOULD BE COMMISSIONED TO IDENTIFY EXACTLY WHERE SUCH CONCENTRATIONS ARE LOCATED AND HOW THEY RELATE TO DIFFERENT REGIONS OF THE PROVINCE.
  
- b) ANY SUCH STUDY SHOULD INCLUDE PROJECTIONS INTO THE FUTURE AND ACCOUNT FOR CURRENT MOBILITY PATTERNS.

\* \* \*

B.

Fact:

The Characteristics of rural seniors are not well understood, especially in comparison to urban seniors.

Research:

A study of the main characterizing features of rural and urban seniors needs to be undertaken to help determine the suitability of city based policies and programs for rural seniors.

- Recommendations:
- a) RESEARCH IS REQUIRED TO DETERMINE THE DIFFERENTIATING CHARACTERISTICS OF RURAL AND URBAN SENIORS.
  - b) ANY MAJOR FINDING OF SUCH RESEARCH SHOULD BE RELATED TO CURRENT POLICY AND PROGRAM DIRECTIONS IN ONTARIO.

\* \* \*

C. Fact:

Relatively little is known about the views of rural seniors themselves, concerning their own needs.

Research:

A series of studies should be undertaken to assess rural seniors' views of their own needs, their own priorities for service provision and their own desires for involvement in the planning process.

Recommendations:

- a) RESEARCH IS REQUIRED IN WHICH RURAL SENIORS ARE GIVEN ADEQUATE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPRESS THEIR OWN VIEWS OF THE NEEDS, STRENGTHS AND PRIORITIES OF RURAL SENIORS.
- b) STUDIES ARE REQUIRED TO IDENTIFY THE MOST EFFECTIVE MECHANISM FOR BRINGING RURAL SENIORS MORE DIRECTLY INTO THE PLANNING PROCESS.
- c) THE FINDINGS OF (a) AND THE CONCERNED ATTEMPT TO INVOLVE RURAL SENIORS (b) SHOULD BE INTEGRATED INTO THE DEVELOPMENT OF POLICY AND THE PLANNING OF SERVICES AND PROGRAMS FOR RURAL SENIORS.

\* \* \*

D. Fact:

There are many examples of rural seniors organizing and maintaining beneficial programs and activities for and by themselves.

Research:

Case Studies are required that will analyze those currently successful group organizations and programs, so that the characteristics that account for success can be identified.

Recommendations:

- a) INITIATE CASE STUDIES ON THOSE ACTIVITIES CONSIDERED TO BE IMPORTANT, SELF-DIRECTED SUCCESSES IN RURAL AREAS WHICH MIGHT PROVIDE INFORMATION AND EXPERIENCE FOR OTHER AREAS AND CITY GROUPS TO LEARN FROM.
  
- b) MANUALS SHOULD BE DESIGNED WHICH ADAPT AND EXPLAIN SUCCESSFUL MODELS OF SELF-RELIANT SERVICE FOR USE BY SENIORS IN OTHER RURAL AREAS.

\* \* \*

E. Fact:

Services for seniors in many rural areas are fewer than in the cities, they tend to be distant and scattered, and many are under-utilized. This is an unsatisfactory situation given that rural seniors should have equal access to services.

**Research:**

A series of studies needs to be undertaken to examine the distribution and effectiveness of social and health services in rural areas given:

1. the concentration of seniors in small towns
2. the changing mobility patterns of rural populations
3. the special characteristics of rural seniors, and
4. the approaching energy crisis.

**Recommendations:**

- a) INITIATE STUDIES THAT WILL SYSTEMATICALLY PROVIDE QUANTIFIABLE INFORMATION ON THE ADEQUACY OF THE SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICE SYSTEMS IN RURAL AREAS AND ON THE USE, ACCESS AND AWARENESS OF THESE BY SENIOR CITIZENS.
- b) COMMENCE STUDIES FOR DEVELOPING SUITABLE MODELS FOR DELIVERING SOCIAL, HEALTH AND HOUSING SERVICES IN RURAL AREAS.
- c) COMMENCE DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS IN DIFFERENT RURAL AREAS IN ORDER TO ASSESS VARIOUS METHODS FOR INCREASING AWARENESS AND UTILIZATION OF SERVICES WHICH ARE CURRENTLY PROVIDED. IMPROVE THE SYSTEM OF SHARING INFORMATION ON SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES FOR RURAL SENIORS.

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**Fact:**

Some individuals and some groups in parts of rural Ontario (non metropolitan) are disadvantaged compared to seniors and adults in their own community and elsewhere.

**Research:**

A major study of special groups should be undertaken to :

1. identify regional differences and concentrations
2. explain why such problems exist, and
3. to suggest possible solutions.

**Recommendations:**

a) RESEARCH SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED TO EXAMINE THE LIVES OF SENIORS IN SPECIAL AREAS OF RURAL ONTARIO SUCH AS SINGLE INDUSTRY TOWNS, NATIVE COMMUNITIES AND TOURIST/RETIREMENT CENTRES.

b) RESEARCH SHOULD BE UNDERTAKEN ON SPECIAL GROUPS SUCH AS THE WIDOWED, THOSE ON FIXED INCOMES, UNATTACHED INDIVIDUALS, THE HOMEBOUND, ETC. AND THE FINDINGS COMPARED ACROSS ALL RURAL AREAS.

\* \* \*

Many of these recommendations are interdependent. Knowing more about the demographics and characteristics of rural seniors and special regional problems will complement information on services and the special strengths of rural seniors. There is a logical progression of the studies recommended. We need to know more about the lives and numbers of rural seniors in general, and especially about how they see their own lives, and goals in particular.

Any combination of studies, if systematically and purposely undertaken, should lead to a better provision of services for seniors in the rural areas of Ontario. The interest of the previous recommendations are that realities such as low population density, large distances, high cost of energy and special needs can be combined with the experience, self-reliance and strengths of rural seniors to formulate new initiatives in policy and program development for an aged rural population in Canada, where the needs are found to exist.

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